

FEDLINE

The magazine of Cambridgeshire Police Federation

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VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

It's time for action

By **Liz Groom**, chair of Cambridgeshire Police Federation

Policing has come under close scrutiny once again with the long-awaited publication of the Strategic Review of Policing.

The review, which took two years for the Police Foundation think tank to complete, came up with 56 recommendations to improve and modernise the service and warned that a crisis in public confidence could only be tackled through root and branch reform.

Many of the findings will strike a chord with our members with the recommendations urging the radical reform to police culture, skills and training and organisational structure the Police Federation has been calling for over the years.

We agree with review chairman Sir Michael Barber when he says policing is at a crossroads and cannot afford to stand still while the world changes around it.

And we feel the same sense of urgency when he says the warning signs are flashing red and are ignored at our peril.

Because it is not only members of the public who believe the quality of service the police provide has fallen in recent years, officers do as well.

For many years now we have been calling for a fully-funded and properly-resourced police service which would allow us not just to react, but also to be proactive in the way we operate and serve the people of Cambridgeshire.

And we have also been trying to highlight the importance of strengthening local policing and improving the numbers and visibility of our frontline officers, again something that is called for in the Strategic Review.

One area over which we differ is the suggestion of a new licence to practise for police officers which, to be honest, would be a bit like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

We have always been opposed to moving in this direction and in the current climate it would be a mistake, creating

yet more obstacles in the way of officer recruitment and retention.

Officers already swear on an oath when they begin their careers and should be confident in taking that oath without the fear of being barred from practising every five years.

We all understand the need for scrutiny and to hold officers, and the police service, to account. We all recognise aspects of the job are in desperate need of reform and ultimately we all want to serve in a modern, efficient police service which is fit for the future.

We want to feel respected and - most importantly - fairly rewarded for the work we do and the dangers we face. Unfortunately, at present, that is not the case for too many of our members.

Another report, the Police Federation's 2021 pay and morale survey, painted a devastating picture of Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

None of our members joined the police to get rich but some of them have reached breaking point and it is not acceptable that so many of them are scrimping and saving so their families can make ends meet.

I think it is quite striking that 90 per cent of Cambridgeshire officers feel they are totally undervalued by the Government and its wilfully negligent attitude towards pay and funding.

This is having a devastating effect on morale and could impact on the service's capability for decades to come which will be damaging for the communities we serve.

These results must be a wake-up call for the Home Secretary and the Government and cannot be ignored.

Unless action is taken and the balance redressed, the strategic review and its recommendations will become pointless.

I will conclude with a reminder that the Police Federation is here for its members and will do whatever it can to give support in times of need.

And, as usual, I would urge our members to stay safe, look out for one another and never be afraid to ask for help.

“ WE WANT TO FEEL RESPECTED AND - MOST IMPORTANTLY - FAIRLY REWARDED FOR THE WORK WE DO AND THE DANGERS WE FACE. UNFORTUNATELY, AT PRESENT, THAT IS NOT THE CASE FOR TOO MANY OF OUR MEMBERS. ”

CALL FOR REFORM OF POLICING

Cambridgeshire Police Federation chair Liz Groom has criticised proposals for a new licence to practise for officers.

Liz described the plan, which is contained in the newly-published Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales, as a “sledgehammer to crack a nut”.

The proposal, one of 56 recommendations in the review carried out by Sir Michael Barber and the think-tank Police Foundation, would see the introduction of a new licence to practise for all police officers that is renewed every five years and subject to strict conditions.

Liz said: “As a Federation we’re against the introduction of a so-called licence to practise.

“It’s one more obstacle in the way of recruitment and, crucially, retention. There’s already a crisis in policing, particularly our detectives, without this.

“Officers make an oath when they begin their careers and should be confident in taking that oath without the fear of being barred from practising.

“Of course we understand the need for scrutiny and to hold officers accountable, but this is a sledgehammer to crack a nut as there are already systems and process in place.”

Other proposals in the Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales included:

- **Creation of a new Crime Prevention Agency**
- **Expansion of the role of the National Crime Agency so it in effect becomes a new FBI for the UK**
- **Merger of back office functions across the 43 forces that could save hundreds of millions of pounds, and**
- **Investment in frontline policing, training and technology to modernise the service from top to bottom.**

The review also highlighted the amount of resources directed to non-policing issues because of pressures on mental health and care services.

ACTION ON SUICIDE

Cambridgeshire Police Federation has welcomed more collaboration within policing to reduce the tragic number of officer suicides.

According to the Office for National Statistics more than 20 police officers take their own lives in England and Wales each year, and this has prompted organisations including the National Police Chiefs’ Council, the College of Policing, the Federation, and others, to commit to working together to tackle the issue.

A consensus statement released at the end of February pledged police organisations, the NHS and the Home Office to develop joint strategies, advance knowledge and understanding of suicide in policing, promote good mental health and signpost the specialist support that is available.

Cambridgeshire Federation chair Liz Groom said: “Police officers are brave and dedicated but we’re also only human. Even those with the broadest shoulders will be impacted by this job and some of the traumatic things we see and experience. It is not easy to brush that off and it can accumulate over the years with tragic results.

“This is why it is so important that all of us in policing look out for our colleagues and recognise the signs that someone may be struggling. This is not just about being a good employer but it’s basic humanity and understanding that police officers – people who selflessly put the welfare of others before their own – need help sometimes too.”

The consensus statement was developed by Oscar Kilo, the National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS), which worked with the UK Health Security Agency (formerly Public Health England) to learn from the ambulance service’s approach to suicide prevention and provide guidance for policing.

A toolkit will be made available to all forces in spring 2022 and will also be accessible via [oscarkilo.org.uk](https://www.oscarkilo.org.uk)

NEWS IN BRIEF

JUDICIAL REVIEW

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW), with the Chief Police Officers’ Staff Association (CPOSA) and the Police Superintendents’ Association (PSA), has filed an application for Judicial Review calling for a truly independent pay mechanism for police officer pay.

PFEW national vice-chair Ché Donald said: “The common theme with this Government is it does not value its police service, it does not recognise the financial hardships police officers are facing daily and has suppressed police pay to the point that there is very little difference between the national living wage and the hourly wage of a new starter.

“The current pay mechanism is just a white elephant, where Government ultimately decides what police officers cannot receive by way of fair remuneration. Our repeated attempts to address this fairly have been met with silence, after all, why would the Government want to change a system designed by them, run by them and with the final decision resting with them?”

“This leaves us with no other alternative but to let someone else decide the merits of fairness, the judiciary.”

He added: “As police officers, we are not being unreasonable in asking for a pay mechanism that acts independently. As public servants, MPs are happy to accept the recommendation of their own independent pay body as binding, all we ask is that they do the same with ours, or perhaps extend the remit of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA).”

TACKLING ASSAULTS

More has to be done to tackle the growing number of assaults on police officers, says Cambridgeshire Police Federation chair Liz Groom.

Liz has spoken out on the issue again after two officers needed hospital treatment after being assaulted in an incident in Whittlesey in February.

“It is totally unacceptable for police officers to continue to face violent attacks as they go about their duties serving and protecting their communities,” says Liz.

“No one should have to accept being assaulted is part of their job but police officers often say that it is just part and parcel of their role.

“That should not be the case. An attack on a police officer is an attack on society itself and that has to be tackled head-on.

“This was a brutal and scary attack on officers who were just doing their job, and it really highlights the reality and danger our brave and hard-working officers face every day.”

Both officers – one male and one female – were taken to hospital following the incident. One suffered serious but not life-threatening injuries. They are being supported by the Force, colleagues and Cambridgeshire Police Federation.

In 2018, following the Police Federation’s Protect the Protectors campaign, the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act came into effect and introduced a sentence of up to 12 months in prison for those convicted of attacks on police officers and other blue light colleagues.

Figures released last July revealed that in the first year following the pandemic lockdown in March 2020 there were 36,969 assaults on police in England and Wales, a rise of 20 per cent. The rise was due, in part, to the increased number of assaults by spitting, with offenders weaponising Covid-19.

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR FINANCES?

From budget planning and saving regularly to managing unexpected costs and achieving savings goals, a new guide puts the focus on financial resilience.

It has been produced by No 1 Copperpot, the credit union offering saving accounts, loans and mortgages to the policing family.

Find out more by searching for Copperpot on our website.



Bleak picture on pay and morale

'Devastating' survey finds three quarters of Cambridgeshire officers dissatisfied with pay – 11 per cent planning to quit

The findings of the Police Federation's latest nationwide survey of how officers view their pay and morale paints a bleak picture across Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

The 2021 survey, released in February, was completed by 792 colleagues – almost half of rank and file officers in the county, and reveals that three quarters (75 per cent) are dissatisfied with their pay and allowances.

Two thirds (66 per cent) reckon they

are worse off financially than they were five years ago and as many as 46 per cent worry about money every day or almost every day – this is slightly higher than the national average of 45 per cent.

The study also found that 15 per cent of colleagues cannot cover all their household essentials and as many as 93 per cent say that they do not feel they are paid fairly for the stresses and strains they have within their job.

More than half (53 per cent) say their

personal morale is currently low (an eight per cent increase since 2020). Many more (81 per cent) believe morale across the Force to be poor, up from 69 per cent in 2020.

Factors cited for low morale were how the Government treats the police (93 per cent), pay and the police are treated by the public (79 per cent), work-life balance (62 per cent), the pandemic (60 per cent) and pensions (58 per cent).

Liz Groom, chair of Cambridgeshire Police Federation, commented: "It is clear our colleagues are at breaking point, and it is simply unacceptable that so many police officers should be scrimping and saving so their families can make ends meet.

"There can be little doubt that police officers stepped up during the pandemic, when they faced rising levels of assaults and almost unenforceable legislation. The Government then saw fit to 'reward' us with a zero per cent pay increase.

“ IT IS CLEAR OUR COLLEAGUES ARE AT BREAKING POINT, AND IT IS SIMPLY UNACCEPTABLE THAT SO MANY POLICE OFFICERS SHOULD BE SCRIMPING AND SAVING SO THEIR FAMILIES CAN MAKE ENDS MEET. ”

“This is why 90 per cent of Cambridgeshire officers say they feel totally undervalued by this Government and its wilfully negligent attitude towards pay and funding. This is having a devastating effect on morale and could impact on the service’s capability for decades to come.”

Perhaps not surprisingly, 58 per cent of respondents would not recommend joining the police and 11 per cent are planning to leave within the next two years – the top reasons for wanting to resign were: low morale (79 per cent), how police are treated by the Government (73 per cent) and the impact on mental health (72 per cent).

In addition, 79 per cent said treatment by the public had a negative impact on their morale, and 71 per cent of Cambridgeshire respondents feel their workload is too high.

National Federation vice-chair Ché Donald said: “Despite the glowing rhetoric we often heard during the pandemic from ministers who queued up on TV to praise policing, these hollow words meant nothing to colleagues who judge politicians through their actions. Police officers are simply not considered a priority, with pay having effectively been cut by 18 per cent in real terms over the past decade.”

KEY FINDINGS:

Key findings included:

- **93 per cent of Cambridgeshire respondents do not feel they are paid fairly for the stresses and strains they have within their job**
- **75 per cent of Cambridgeshire respondents are dissatisfied with their overall remuneration (including basic pay and allowances)**
- **71 per cent said their workload has been too high or much too high in the last 12 months**
- **58 per cent would not recommend joining the police to others**
- **53 per cent said their morale is currently low and 81 per cent feel that morale within the Force is currently low**
- **46 per cent reported worrying about their personal finances every day or almost every day**
- **15 per cent reported never or almost never having enough money to cover their essentials**
- **11 per cent want to leave in the next two years.**

REASONS FOR LOW MORALE

The survey asked respondents about the factors that had a positive or negative impact on their morale, the table below shows the proportion of respondents in Cambridgeshire Constabulary who said a particular factor has had a negative impact upon their morale compared to the national figures.

	Negative impact on morale (Cambridgeshire Constabulary)	Negative impact on morale (England and Wales)
Pay	79%	84%
Workload and responsibilities	72%	64%
Work-life balance	62%	58%
How the police are treated by the government	93%	95%
How the police are treated by the public	79%	84%
The COVID-19 crisis	60%	61%
Your pension	58%	73%

SATISFACTION WITH PAY

A total of 93 per cent of respondents from Cambridgeshire Constabulary told us they do not feel they are paid fairly for the stresses and strains they have within their job, and 85 per cent said that they are not fairly paid for the hazards they faced within their role. Comparison of 2021 and 2020 figures for perceptions of fair pay in Cambridgeshire Constabulary is provided in the table below.

75 per cent of respondents from Cambridgeshire Constabulary said they are dissatisfied with their overall remuneration (including basic pay and allowances) and 57 per cent said they are dissatisfied with their pensions. Comparison of 2021 and 2020 figures for pay and remuneration in Cambridgeshire Constabulary is provided in the table below.

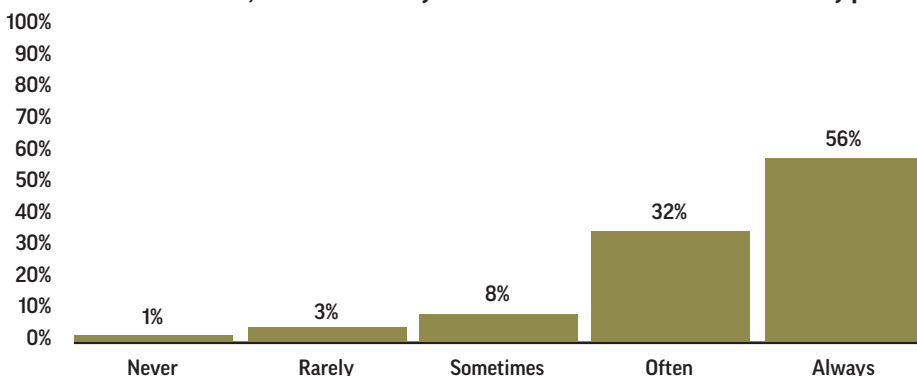
	2021	2020
Do not feel fairly paid for the stresses and strains of their job	93%	89%
Do not feel fairly paid for the hazards faced within their job	85%	80%

	2021	2020
Dissatisfied with total remuneration	75%	70%
Dissatisfied with pension	57%	49%

WORKLOAD AND WORKING TIME

Only four per cent of respondents from Cambridgeshire Constabulary said they have either never or rarely been able to take at least one rest day per week in the last 12 months. This is compared to six per cent of respondents in England and Wales as a whole who said they have either never or rarely been able to take at least one rest day per week in the last 12 months.

Over the last 12 months, how often have you been able to take at least one rest day per week



71 per cent of respondents from Cambridgeshire Constabulary said that over the last 12 months, their workload has been too high or much too high. This proportion is lower than the proportion of respondents in England and Wales where 63 per cent of respondents said that over the last 12 months their workload has been too high or much too high.

Just under half (45 per cent) of respondents from Cambridgeshire Constabulary said over the last 12 months they have often or always worked more than 48 hours per week. In England and Wales overall, 53 per cent of respondents said over the last 12 months they have often or always worked more than 48 hours per week.

Holly and Paul become first ambassadors for Flint House



Paul and Holly take centre stage with other Flint House Ambassadors.

Cambridgeshire's wellbeing dog and her owner have been named among the first ambassadors for Flint House Rehabilitation Centre.

Holly, a seven-year-old Labrador, and PC Paul Roe were asked to take on the role and support those receiving treatment at the centre, as well as the staff who work there.

The ambassadorial roles came after Paul spent time at Flint House several times to receive physio for a dislocated ankle and also for a wellbeing break.

"When I went to Flint House, I asked if I could bring my wellbeing dog for two weeks and they accommodated us both," explained Paul, "They saw what a positive impact Holly had on everyone at the centre and that led them to ask us to be ambassadors."

Holly's ability to help people stems back to when Paul injured his ankle, which led to a severe change in his mental health. Paul was soon after diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which was triggered after he was called to four train crashes all within 12 months of each other.

Paul and Holly now visit the centre, which is based in Oxfordshire and aims to help people in the police service recover from mental or physical injuries, for three days every other month.

"I generally do a presentation on mental health, along with the support we can give and having Holly around helps to break down barriers, people start to open up," said Paul.

"If somebody had said to me 10 years ago that I would be doing this and helping

people with their mental health with the support of a wellbeing dog, I wouldn't have believed them."

Paul says Flint House provides an "amazing, relaxing environment".

He added: "It's not just those being treated who we support, it's staff too, they love seeing Holly. Sometimes, people just need a cuddle from Holly or to play with her, to help them open up. It's amazing to see."

Earlier last year, Holly underwent training, including an assessment to ensure she is safe to be on Force premises and around staff. Paul is now trained to help officers with their wellbeing and point them in the direction of further help while recognising any potential suicide risks.



Flint House provides invaluable support for officers

Each year, thousands of police officers attend The Flint House Police Rehabilitation Centre to help them get back to full operational duty.

The facility, based in Goring onThames in Oxfordshire, uses a specialised programme of treatment and therapies to get subscribing officers fit for duty as quickly as possible.

The medical team consists of physiotherapists, mental health practitioners and registered nurses and their priority is to offer treatment to all patients to help them in their return to full health and fitness.

Each patient receives an individual assessment and is given a personalised programme of physiotherapy and/or health and wellbeing treatment while at the centre.

Treatments range from physiotherapy to stress counselling, from hydrotherapy to sleep and relaxation. Officers who have had to use its services describe it as a lifeline.

In recent years a new £750,000 gym has been opened along with a £2.4 million swimming pool and larger hydrotherapy pool.

Yet, despite all that Flint House has to offer, and the way in which it can help officers get back to full health, only two thirds of Cambridgeshire officers subscribe



to the facility

“Flint House is a great facility and is renowned for helping officers get back on their feet and return to full duties.

Most officers associate Flint House with physiotherapy but it offers so much more than that. As more and more officers have suffered mentally and emotionally due to the pressures of the role, the Flint House team has put together a mental wellbeing programme which I know from first-hand experience is extremely beneficial,” says Liz Groom, chair of Cambridgeshire Police Federation.

“Subscribing to Flint House costs less than £2.50 a week, less than the cost of a small drink from a coffee shop, and that subscription can act as a bit of an insurance policy. As police officers we never know

what’s round the corner and knowing I have access to Flint House’s facilities and expert care certainly gives me peace of mind. Given the cost of private physio or counselling, subscribing to Flint House is incredibly cost- effective.”

Flint House has 158 individual patient bedrooms. All rooms are fully en suite with Freeview TV and tea and coffee making facilities. In addition to the gym and other indoor facilities, including Pilates and other exercise groups, the centre organises health walks around the local countryside while other outside activities include putting, bowls or boules, a golf net and an outdoor gym.

If you are a serving officer who does not donate to Flint House and wants to, please contact the Federation office.

'I wanted to help'

Workplace representative Mark Rabel explains why he enjoys his Federation role and the challenges it can bring

Cambridgeshire Police Federation workplace representative Sergeant Mark Rabel admits juggling his day job with members' needs can be a challenge but enjoys providing support in times of crisis.

Mark became a Fed rep in 2020 when he felt the lack of diversity within the Federation was starting to have an impact on colleagues and has since undertaken courses on conduct and equality.

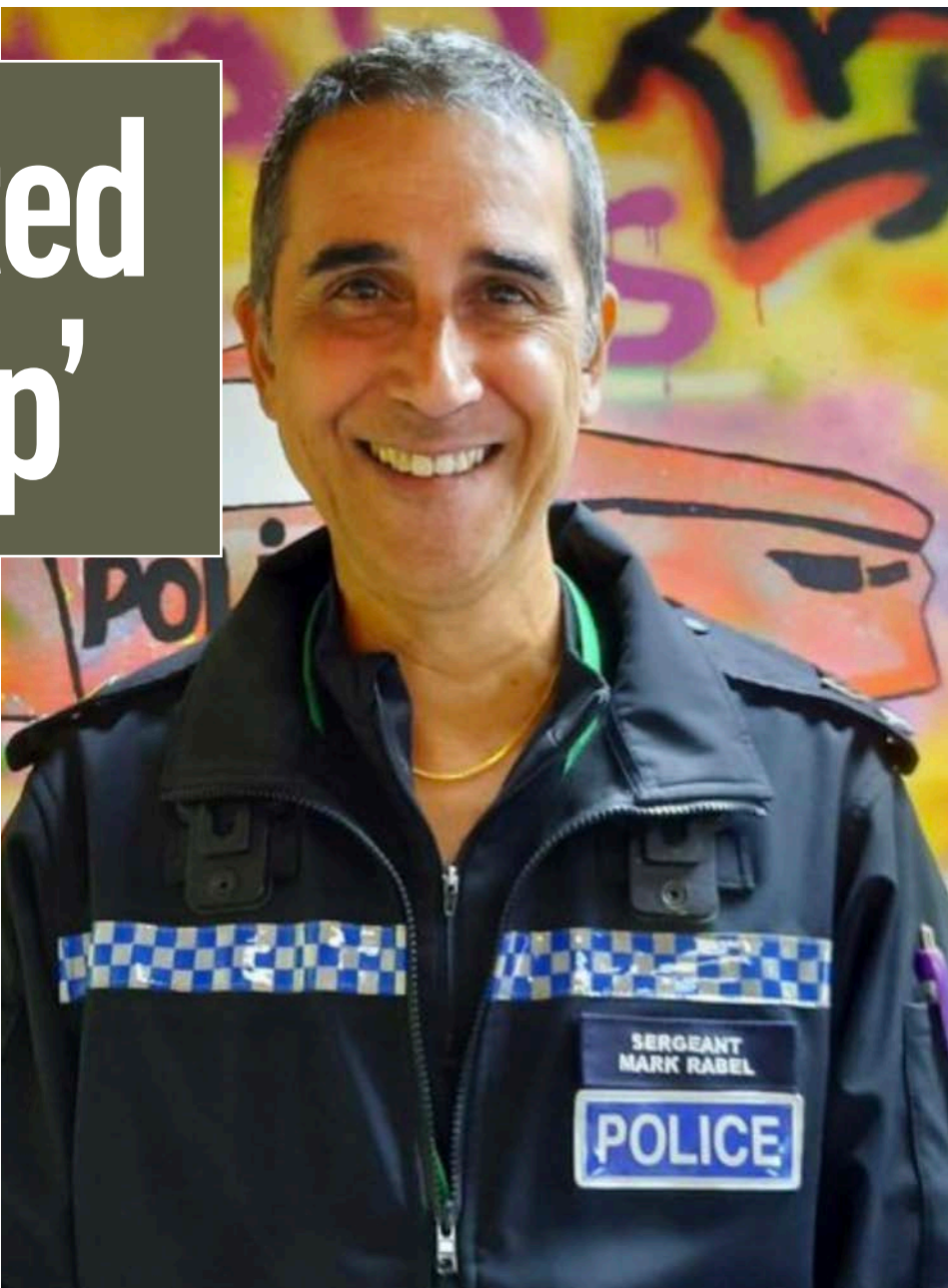
He said: "I am of Asian heritage and there were no people of colour in Cambridgeshire Police Federation.

"Some of our officers had started seeking help outside our Federation for support. I wanted to help.

"I can bring life experience of being from a minority ethnic background into my role within the Federation and I enjoy giving back to colleagues support and help in their times of need and making sure that they are treated fairly and properly."

Mark acknowledged being a Fed rep could be very demanding on time and diary commitments and said it was often a challenge to balance the requirements of his day job with the needs of members.

But he said those who required the



assistance of the Federation usually did so in a time of crisis and so tended to need its support right there and then.

He added: "I am still operational and have a good understanding of pressures faced by our members.

"Setting a realistic expectation and getting a positive result for the member is the most rewarding aspect of the role."

Mark said the Police Federation on a national level should strive to remain credible and have a meaningful impact in terms of pay and conditions and locally, called for reps to be given sufficient time

and support to fulfil their roles.

He joined the Force in 2001 and reflecting on his decision to follow a career in policing, he admitted: "I wanted to catch crooks and lock them up. I was probably inspired by the TV show The Bill!"

Mark has held a variety of roles from response policing, Force control room, custody sergeant and some specialised neighbourhood posts. He is now a partnerships and prevention sergeant

He warned the police service nationally had to tackle the ongoing challenge of providing sufficient resources to service ever-increasing and constantly-changing demand.

And he has some sound advice for new officers just joining the Force.

"Have fun, learn as much as you can and don't be too narrowly focussed in what you want to achieve," he said.

"If you make a mistake don't worry - but speak to someone as soon as possible and get your money's worth from the Police Federation!"

“ I CAN BRING LIFE EXPERIENCE OF BEING FROM A MINORITY ETHNIC BACKGROUND INTO MY ROLE WITHIN THE FEDERATION AND I ENJOY GIVING BACK TO COLLEAGUES SUPPORT AND HELP IN THEIR TIMES OF NEED AND MAKING SURE THAT THEY ARE TREATED FAIRLY AND PROPERLY. ”

Stu follows in his granddad's footsteps

Workplace representative Stu Taylor explains his inspiration for becoming a police officer

Stu Taylor was inspired to become a police officer by his granddad, who served before, during and after the Second World War.

Stu's current role is in Intelligence and Specialist Crime Department (ISCD) at Force Headquarters, having worked uniform, CID and child protection since joining in 2004.

But it was hearing his granddad talk about his career that drove him to becoming a police officer in the first place.

"As a child I'd spend a lot of time with him and my Nan at weekends, listening to stories from when he served," he said.

"This inspired me into wanting to become a police officer.

"After recently doing my family tree, I discovered my great grandfather was also a police officer, as well as having a great uncle who was a police officer. Unfortunately, he died young in service in Yorkshire.

"My eldest daughter is currently a Special sergeant serving in Southern, so you could say policing is a family vocation."

Stu became a Federation workplace representative five years after a mixed experience of the Police Federation, and was re-elected last year.

"I've been represented by some really good and some not so good reps in the past," he explained. "I wanted to provide the same level of support I received from the good reps, as well as making sure the officers I represent don't experience some of the bad things I did when I was poorly represented.

"I'm a genuine and sincere, and have a passion to help my colleagues.

"I enjoy helping resolve issues and



giving the person I help that little bit of faith that we're here for them."

Stu said he gets frustrated by comments from colleagues that the Federation is a "toothless tiger and doesn't do anything", but said it's satisfying when he gets a result on behalf of a colleague.

"What I find rewarding is when you speak to an officer and help resolve an issue for them and they can't thank you enough, or you can see by their facial expression, emotionally how much it means to them," he explained.

Stu says he's proud to be the branch's detective lead: "It's the most demanding and challenging area of policing at the moment, and those members deserve my ear and support with any issues they face."

He said one of the challenges facing the branch at the moment was the number of colleagues looking for support which could lead to a need for more full-time reps.

"A challenge facing policing is that long-service officers are a thing of the past and with having officers with little to no experience, there's a potential impact on the service," he said.

"My advice for new officers is to listen to all the advice and support provided to you when you join by training and the guest speakers.

"Don't just make a decision on something just based upon what somebody else thinks or suggests you should do. If you're unsure ask or seek help. And if in doubt call a rep."



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Celebrating International Women's Day: 'Policing is a wonderful career for women'

Marking International Women's Day, Liz Groom, the first female chair of Cambridgeshire Police Federation, has described policing as a "wonderful career for women" and encouraged more to join the service.

"I would say to any woman considering joining the police today please do, it's a wonderful career," said Liz, "I have met some amazing people and made friendships for life. It's not easy, it's harder now than ever before for new joiners, but there are real opportunities and having a family is not a barrier to progression."

International Women's Day is held on 8 March annually and celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. It also raises awareness about women's equality and lobbies for gender parity. It has been marked since 1911 and this year's theme is #BreakTheBias to address deliberate or unconscious bias which makes it difficult for women to move ahead – something Liz has experienced.

"When I joined the Roads Policing Department as a sergeant, I was the first female sergeant in the role for some 20 years. It was a battle to get there and then, after just four months, I fell pregnant with my daughter which was a huge, but wonderful surprise as I didn't think I could have another child after trying for eight years!

"The reaction I had from the department, however, was one of disappointment rather than support. Not from my inspector, who was great, but from some of my peers. The room would "go quiet" when I walked in and it actually made me think about whether I wanted to come back and work in this male dominated department that seemed to think I got 'pregnant on purpose'.

"But I started working alongside the collision investigation team while I was on restricted duties and they restored my faith as they were a great bunch who made coming to work enjoyable."

But Liz, who joined the Force in 1996 after deciding university wasn't for her and replying to a job advert in her local newspaper, says the police service has changed since then.

"Policing today and how women are perceived has most definitely changed," she explained, "After I joined we had intakes of just women and the recruitment of female officers has really increased and been improving over the years.

"Some recent intakes have been 50/50 male/female ratio so we are attracting more women into policing which helps with the



Liz Groom at the national Police Bravery Awards 2020 with the Cambridgeshire nominees Nick Ashton-Jones (right) and Dan Bramley.



Liz's father during his Army service.

perception that it's a man's role. We also have more women working in more specialised roles such as firearms and roads policing or dogs but still not enough so this area needs more work.

"I also think the increased fitness test is often a barrier as the figures do show that women struggle psychologically with it."

"But one of the biggest changes for me is that having a family now doesn't mean the end of your career. Part-time and flexible working make having a family and remaining at work so much easier."

Liz then explained how a particularly supportive female inspector changed how she viewed her own career progression.

"After I had my son, over 19 years ago, I returned to work part-time and on a flexible shift pattern. My female inspector at the time asked if I had ever considered promotion as she thought I would suit the role of sergeant because I was a natural leader.

"I didn't think it would even be entertained but she supported me and it prompted me to take the exam even though I started 'acting up' before passing it. It was hard work, studying for the exam in between work and having a very young baby and my husband was also a full-time police officer working shifts. But the encouragement and support she gave me pushed me through and I am glad she did as I love the rank of sergeant."

But there was another test ahead for both Liz and the service when her son received a medical diagnosis. She explained: "My son was diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum when he was just

under three-years-old. This caused further challenges because mainstream childcare wasn't ideal as he sometimes became aggressive to other children. I worked in custody then and my inspector in this role was particularly supportive around his needs and me attending courses to help us manage his behaviour at home.

"My husband, who is also in the job, was also allowed to work flexibly around my shifts as I returned to work full-time. Ironically, it was then him who faced some difficulty in career progression due to being a flexible worker as it wasn't something many men did and his colleagues and managers were not understanding."

Liz also said she would encourage anyone to use the Federation as it's meant to be used: "You can always approach the Federation for advice if you don't feel happy with something. But I would say please don't be afraid of challenging colleagues if you witness behaviour you are not comfortable with. Early conversations with colleagues and managers can stop issues from escalating and make work a happier place for everyone.

"We have a good balance of female Federation reps who are trained in most areas of equality and conduct and are, of course, approachable. Becoming a rep wasn't something I always wanted to do but a sergeant colleague, who was a rep, encouraged me because I wasn't afraid to speak up if something wasn't right.

"I also never planned on becoming the branch chair but here I am – the first female chair of Cambridgeshire Police Federation and very pleased to be so. That in itself is a move in the right direction for women."

Home Secretary Prit Patel speaking at the online conference in 2021.

Federation to stage national conference in May

The Police Federation's annual national conference will take place in Manchester in May.

The conference will take place on 17 and 18 May with delegates from across the country expected to attend.

In 2021, the conference was held virtually for the first time, and the 2020 event was cancelled all together due to the pandemic so this is the first time in three years that delegates from forces across England and Wales will meet in person.

"National conference is always one

of the highlights of the Federation year," says Liz Groom, chair of Cambridgeshire Police Federation, "It gives Fed reps the opportunity to hear from key figures in policing – such as the Home Secretary and the police minister – but also to meet reps

from other forces and share experiences and good practice."

The conference is live streamed so you can also watch all or some of the sessions.

Look out for more details about conference on our website and social media.

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Nominations open for 2022 Women in Policing Award

Cambridgeshire Police Federation chair Liz Groom has encouraged members to nominate women who have made an outstanding contribution to policing for a major award.

Nominations for this year's Women in Policing Award are now open and Liz hopes to see colleagues recognised and celebrated for their achievements.

She said: "Women make an enormous contribution to policing, not only here in Cambridgeshire but across the country. It's fantastic that their contributions, achievements, and brave and selfless service is being recognised.

"I'd encourage members to nominate their female colleagues who have gone above and beyond."

Launched by the Police Federation of England and Wales in 2015, the award recognises a current or recently retired officer who has gone above and beyond their job, while on duty.

The first Women in Policing Award was presented to the families of Fiona Bone and Nicola Hughes, the two Greater Manchester Police officers killed in a gun and grenade attack in 2012.

Nominations can be made by police officers or police staff and the closing date is 28 March, simply contact Cambridgeshire Police Federation to put someone forward.

The winner will be announced at the Police Federation's annual national conference in Manchester in May.



2021 award winner
Chief Inspector
Sharon Baker.